



**Govanhill**  
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

**Resident Engagement Policy**

**Strategy and Action Plan**

**August 2024 to August 2029**



## **1 Introduction**

1.1 Welcome to the Govanhill Housing Association (GhHA) Resident Engagement Policy, Strategy and Action Plan. This document has been informed and updated over many years of successful engagement and participation by tenants and residents at the Association; we wish to take this opportunity to thank all of the tenants, residents and committees who have contributed their views and ideas over the years and we look forward to continuing to work with new and existing residents over the coming years as your influence truly drives our performance.

## **2 Statement on Tenant and Resident Engagement**

2.1 GhHA is a community controlled, registered social landlord with charitable status. We are fully committed to working in partnership with tenants and other residents; we value participation in all aspects of the Association's operations. At GhHA, we refer to the term "Resident Engagement" as, for us, this is not just about the landlord and tenant relationship, but we see engagement as a much wider approach to include the owners or other residents of Govanhill.

2.2 The commitment we have stems from our understanding that the opportunity for consultation and engagement is a basic right of all our tenants, enshrined in legislation and through the tenancy agreement we offer. It is beneficial to everyone involved and, at a wider level, to the local community if tenants and other residents have a meaningful role in making decisions and understand the processes involved, with the aim to achieving better working relationships between us all.

2.3 The aims of this document are to ensure that the Association gives tenants and other residents every opportunity to become involved in influencing the decision-making of the Association and the services it provides, at a level that suits them, and in a manner which fully complies with relevant legislation and good practice.

2.4 We will provide translated documents in English, Urdu, Slovakian and Romanian in our engagement, participation and consultations, these are the top languages in our community. Translation services are offered to anyone requiring to engage with GhHA.

2.5 GhHA recognise that tenant and other resident participation includes:

- A spectrum of activities and levels of involvement; from receiving information to joint decision making and ownership
- A two-way dialogue between landlord and tenants and other residents, in which landlords are open to influence, and tenants/residents have the capacity to influence
- Requires trust, respect and the shared aim of improving housing conditions, community and related services
- Can be continually improved to ensure that our services remain responsive to tenants and other residents.

2.6 There are benefits for Residents and the Association by:

- Building and maintaining better links between the community and the Association
- Helping to build a strong community spirit
- Working towards improving satisfaction with our services and value for money
- Developing new experiences, knowledge and skills for everyone connected.

### **3 Govanhill Resident Engagement - Key Commitments**

3.1 Our commitment is to provide information about the opportunities to engagement and participate in the Associations activities, to achieve this, information will be available:

- From our staff
- On request to the Resident Engagement worker or Tenancy team
- In our reception areas
- At the settling in visit for new tenants
- At the Annual Home Visit
- In the quarterly newsletter
- On the website
- On our Facebook page
- In community outlets
- At community events

3.2 Our commitment to tenants and other residents to encourage their engagement and participation:

- We will hold quarterly 'Welcome to Govanhill' Coffee and Chat meetings with new tenants
- We will respond to requests for support to develop backcourt; neighbour; block initiatives or residents' groups
- We will co-ordinate the Factored Owners Forum
- We will invite interested tenants or residents to take part in focus groups and other forms of consultation on specific areas of service improvement or policy
- We will hold drop ins with tenants to support their engagement with the Association and each other

3.3 Our commitment to Registered Tenants' Organisations to support their engagement and participation:

- Planning for and delivery of annual action planning session and training needs analysis
- Support with and attendance at AGM and committee meetings
- Annual funding to help with running costs and engagement activities
- Involvement in relevant Association policy reviews or consultations
- Feedback and analysis on our Annual Return of the Charter performance and how this is presented
- Make links between the Association's Management Committee and RTOs

3.4 Our commitment to engage with tenants, factored owners and other residents on day-to-day repairs and maintenance services:

- We will communicate by text and email with tenants as appropriate
- We will carry out regular post work satisfaction surveys
- We will provide PDF copies of letters via email
- We will translate key standard letters into the top 3 community languages as well as English.
- We will work with tenants to ensure our service is efficient and provides value for money

3.5 Our commitment to engage with resident on development and regeneration services:

- We will consult tenants and private owners on any proposed Major Repairs or Planned Maintenance works affecting their properties
- We will consult with tenants on the priorities for Major Repairs/Planned Maintenance Works within the budgets available on an annual basis via the rent consultation
- We will advise owners on the availability of Repair Grants for Common Works and facilitate maximum grant awards to minimise costs and obtain agreement
- We will offer choices of finishes to tenants when replacing kitchens and bathrooms within a planned programme of works
- We will seek feedback on satisfaction levels from tenants who have received major component replacement works
- We will consult with neighbouring tenants, owners and the wider community when developing proposals for new housing or other capital projects

3.6 Our commitment to engage with tenants on housing management services:

- Throughout the housing application, sign up and settling in period of a tenancy we will engage with new tenants at each stage and beyond
- We will engage with tenants to prevent and resolve estate management and anti-social behaviour issues
- We will hold estate walk-about inspections with interested tenants and residents on a regular basis
- We will always have a member of staff on duty to discuss your tenancy, housing circumstances and your rent account
- We will support tenants to apply for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit

3.7 Our commitment to the wider community:

- Support to and from GCDT (Govanhill Community Development Trust)
- Support for back court and environmental projects
- Support for integration activities e.g. ESOL classes, employability initiatives from GCDT

- Support for promotion of volunteering opportunities by GCDT
- GCDT will assist us to develop our engagement with local people from different communities on issues around the Locality Plan for Govanhill.

#### **4 Links with Other Policies or Plans**

4.1 This document links directly with other policies including:

- Equalities; Communication; Procurement

It is important that this document informs any development of service standards throughout the organisation. It also clearly links to the Vision, Values and priorities of our Business Plan of:

*Everyone living in Govanhill and Merrylee should:*

- Enjoy good quality, warm, safe and affordable housing that contributes to their health and wellbeing and to community pride
- Live in a neighbourhood that is clean and well cared for, with excellent neighbourhood services and opportunities for all

To help achieve this vision, the Business Plan sets out priorities on an annual basis:

#### **5 Legislative Background**

5.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced a legal framework for tenant participation. The Act introduced new rights for tenants and placed new duties on landlords. Social landlords are required to:

- provide a range of information for tenants
- have a Tenant Participation Strategy in place (this is our Strategy)
- have a registration scheme for tenant organisations
- keep a publicly available register of these registered tenant organisations
- consult with tenants and registered tenant organisations on a range of housing and related services

5.2 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 included provision for a Scottish Social Housing Charter; setting out what tenants and other customers can expect from social landlords. This was updated and reissued in April 2017 and again in November 2022. The Act also placed a duty on social landlords to report annually on outcomes to the Scottish Housing Regulator

5.3 The Charter is important to tenants and other residents because:

- it helps tenants have a clear understanding of what can be expected from the landlord
- it gives those who need to be housed an understanding of what they can expect from a prospective landlord
- it gives landlords clarity and certainty around what they should be achieving for their tenants and other service users by meeting their statutory duties on tenant participation.

5.4 The elements of the Charter Outcomes and Standards that are directly linked to this

document are:

## **1: Equalities**

### ***Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:***

- *they support the right to adequate housing*
- *every tenant and other customer has their individual needs and rights recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.*

GhHA strives to achieve equality of opportunity and treatment in all that we do, and to work in a way that values and respects tenants and other residents in the community. We aim to remove barriers to effective participation, whether they are due to life experiences, physical or geographical, cultural or financial. We recognise that everyone is an individual and aim to meet their needs accordingly.

In line with the Equality Act 2010 we are committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

We produce an Equalities Action Plan to enable us to prioritise and implement our commitments.

## **2: Communication**

### ***Social landlords manage their businesses so that:***

- *tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.*

It is important that we share and exchange information about policy and service provision. Tenants and other residents can communicate with GhHA in the following ways:

- Telephone: 0141 636 3636
- Email: [checkin@govanhillha.org](mailto:checkin@govanhillha.org)
- Contribute to our quarterly newsletters
- Via Facebook / social media
- Respond to our surveys
- Request a home visit
- Via tenants' / residents' groups
- Attend meetings
- Website: [www.govanhillha.org](http://www.govanhillha.org)
- Write to: Samaritan House, 79 Coplaw Street, Glasgow G42 7JG

- Come into the office at the above address or our office at 53 Ashmore Road in Merrylee

GhHA aims to ensure that tenants and other service users have access to information on our services and policies using the following methods:

- Tenants handbook
- Health and Safety handbook
- Texting Service
- Website
- Regular newsletter
- Leaflets
- Mailings
- Meetings
- Tenants conference
- LCD screen at reception in Samaritan House
- Regular liaison with tenants 'and residents' groups
- Subscribing to Happy to Translate
- Staff members with multi lingual skills
- Publications in the top 3 community languages
- YouTube videos
- Information in different formats and other languages on request.
- Opportunities for residents to develop skills and knowledge to take best advantage of the Association's website and resident portal.

### **3: Participation**

#### **Social landlords manage their businesses so that:**

- *tenants and other customers are offered a range of opportunities that make it easy for them to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.*

There are many ways for residents to be involved in GhHA, as individuals or in groups, for example:

- Become a shareholder in GhHA, interested persons can become a member for just £1, vote at AGMs and stand for election to the management committee
- Come to our monthly resident drop in
- Take part in a one-off focus group – chaired by a member of staff or independent consultant to look at a service or policy review. The information gathered from these meetings plays an important role in influencing the decisions made and how we go about implementing any changes or improvements.
- Join a short life working group (with staff) – as above but more in depth, and more than one meeting is involved.
- Join a tenants' / residents' group – a more formal way to engage with the Housing Association. A tenants' association is independent, representing local people, with elected leaders. Staff will attend if invited.

- Respond to a survey or questionnaire – e.g. our independent customer satisfaction survey, or our annual rent survey. These provide vital feedback from a wide range of tenants and help us identify what areas of service need to be improved.
- Join an estate walkabout – residents can meet with staff to inspect local communal areas and work together to resolve any problems.
- Join in our social activities – for example in our community garden, or as part of the work we do with registered tenants’ organisations (RTOs)
- Attend events or public meetings – for example a tenants’ conference, our summer sessions or open days
- Serve on the management committee of Govanhill Housing Association – as a member you may want to be involved in the governance of the Housing Association. We can offer advice and training on what this involves.

5.5 In producing this document, we have also reviewed other relevant guidance, including:

**The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015**, which has a specific focus on promoting effective engagement and participation to help communities achieve greater control and influence in the decisions and circumstances that affect their lives.

**The National Standards for Community Engagement**, which are good- practice principles designed to support and inform the process of community engagement and improve what happens as a result.

**The Scottish Housing Regulator’s (SHR) new regulatory and governance requirements**, introduced in 2019, that require landlords to publish an Annual Assurance Statement.

## 6 How we develop Resident Engagement at GhHA

- 6.1 To continue to develop our strategy, we review what we have done before and what tenants and residents tell us at any given time. We also look at how we have delivered our action plans in the preceding years.
- 6.2 We encourage feedback from a wide range of tenants and residents on how we further develop engagement and participation opportunities; this has allowed us to establish that, for GhHA, this is more about resident engagement than tenant participation.
- 6.3 We invite involvement through articles in our newsletters; on the website and we use comments and complaints that we receive and feedback from groups that regularly engage with us.
- 6.4 We recognize that not everyone finds it easy to get involved. Difficulties people present with as barriers to participation include: personal health problems; caring responsibilities; work and study pressures. People are more likely to agree to take

part in a short life focus group or complete one of our surveys. Issues of interest change over the years, however, there remains consistently expressed areas of:

- Affordability or rents
- Maintenance both day to day and improvements
- Environmental community clean ups.

6.5 Our customer satisfaction survey is carried out every 3 years. Our latest survey was face to face with 44% of tenants and XX% of owners during February/March 2024. This survey provides us with great insight to the effectiveness of our engagement with tenants and factored owners and the levels of interest in involvement in the work that we do.

6.6 Each satisfaction survey will have an action plan prepared and presented to the Management Committee and regular updates to the sub-committee.

## **7 Consultation on Policy Reviews**

7.1 There are several policies under review each year at the Association, some, we will engage with a range of tenants, potential tenants, and other residents. The policy review schedule is presented to committee on an annual basis.

7.2 As part of our procurement strategy, the Association is required to develop consultation and engagement prior to individual procurements, where relevant and proportionate, to allow the views of those affected to be expressed and considered.

7.3 In any consultation the Association will undertake to give feedback in a clear and honest manner on how tenant and other resident opinions have helped to shape a policy or service development, or if they have not, why this is the case

## **8 Registered Tenants Organisations**

8.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced the idea of registered tenants' organisations (RTOs). It means that any tenants' group can apply to become an RTO. GhHA must keep a register of such tenant organisations, which is open to inspection by the public at any time. Groups can appeal to the Scottish Government if they are refused registration.

8.2 RTO status gives groups the statutory right to be provided with information and consultation about important decisions relating to the housing services.

8.3 To be registered, GhHA requires that any tenants' group adopts a formal constitution, works in a fair, open and democratic manner and does not discriminate against any of the nine protected characteristics. The Association also requires the group to keep tenants and other residents informed of its work on a regular basis.

- 8.4 GhHA must consult with RTOs before making or changing any policies that will have a significant impact on members of the group. Following any consultation the Association must also demonstrate that it has taken account of any comments made by RTOs.
- 8.5 Registered Tenant Organisations are independent. They have their own written constitutions, their own management committees and records of their accounts that are available to the public.

## **9 Resources and Training**

- 9.1 GhHA will ensure that sufficient funds to support our Resident Engagement Strategy are set aside within our annual budget. Tenants and residents should not be financially affected for participating with us. We can provide assistance with the following:
- Development or organisational support to new and existing tenants' or residents' groups
  - Start up and top-up grants to constituted groups that meet specific criteria
  - Provide practical support e.g. stationery, photocopying, premises for meetings, publicity (newsletters, flyers etc.)
  - Information about our structures, policies and procedures
  - Staff can attend meetings if requested
  - Use of our offices to hold meetings
  - Training
  - Events (e.g. Tenants conference)
  - Care costs, travel and subsistence (e.g. for focus group or training event)
- 9.2 Tenants' or residents' groups that are not registered as an RTO with GhHA may still be supported or funded at a reduced rate, at our discretion.
- 9.3 To build the skills and knowledge of our tenants and residents we will offer to arrange training on aspects of our organisation, any new development in housing law or practice, and will respond to requests where possible. A start up handbook for tenants' groups is available on request.

## **10 Our Engagement and Participation Structures and Activity**

- 10.1 In 2013 the Association employed a Tenant & Resident Participation Officer with the aim of developing resident involvement. In 2024, the role was changed to Resident Engagement Assistant (REA) to reflect the changes in the work that we do. The REA supports the following:
- The Management Committee and Sub-Committees
  - Jamieson Court Residents Group (RTO- disbanded in 2024, group remains active)
  - Merrylee Residents & Tenants Organisation (RTO)
  - MERGE welfare group (RTO)

- Govanhill Community Garden Residents & Tenants Association (RTO)
- Govanhill Festival Committee
- Factored Owners Forum
- New build design working group
- Various one-off events
- GCDT

10.2 We develop an action plan which is reviewed and agreed on an annual basis. It will include:

- Supporting our governance arrangements
- Our work with the RTOs
- An examination of our performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter (Annual Return of the Charter)
- Involving tenants in the self- assessment process
- Involving tenants in the review of the action plan each year

## **11 Monitoring & Review**

11.1 Resident involvement is key to all our activities, and so our Management Committee, made up of tenants and other shareholders, and elected by the Association's members, is responsible for the monitoring and review of the Policy, Strategy and Action Plans. Reports are presented to the Committee on a quarterly basis.

11.2 An annual review will consider:

- How are we meeting the tenant participation provisions as set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001?
- Is the Strategy helping us to meet the Scottish Social Housing Charter outcomes?
- Is there evidence of success?
- Do Residents have the opportunity to participate in a manner which suits them?
- How can we show that engagement and participation is achieving influence?
- Is the monitoring and review framework effective?

11.3 This document will be reviewed every five years, or earlier if good practice, feedback from customers or statute require. Action plans will be reviewed annually.

### Strategy Review

- 1.1 Tenant participation is 'about tenants taking part in decision-making processes and influencing decisions about housing policies, housing conditions and housing services. It is a two-way process that involves the sharing of information, ideas and power. Its aim is to improve the standard of housing conditions and service.' (National Strategy for Tenant Participation – Partners in Participation, 1999)
- 1.2 A legal framework for tenant participation was introduced in the 2001 Housing (Scotland) Act, and the introduction of the Scottish Social Housing Charter in 2012, updated in November 2022 further empowered tenants to work in partnership with their landlords to monitor and challenge decisions and performance.
- 1.3 In 2024, 98% of tenants responding to our customer satisfaction survey said they were satisfied with the opportunities to participate.
- 1.4 Govanhill has had dedicated post-holders since 2013 and this commitment continues within the staff structure, this is a clear commitment from the management committee towards recognising the value of resident involvement on all aspects of the business. It is important to emphasize that all Govanhill employees have a role in promoting and supporting engagement and participation.
- 1.5 For the 2024/25 action plans, residents have told us their priority areas of service that could benefit from more resident involvement.

This document reflects on the key activities that have taken place and allows for an informed basis for the action plans going forward.

### 2. Awareness Raising

- 2.1 In 2017 we carried out a door knocking exercise aiming to call at every property managed, to raise awareness of opportunities in Govanhill and Merrylee. In 2024, we will reintroduce biannual home visits with the aim to meet every tenant over a 18 month to two-year period.
- 2.2 We hold coffee and chat events days, and while this does not attract many tenants, it offers the chance for those who work 9 – 5 to pop in with any queries they may have. The REA worker also spends one half day per week in the Merrylee office and has close links with GCDT colleagues, and promotes engagement and participation opportunities.
- 2.3 We issue quarterly newsletter and keep our Facebook page updated.
- 2.4 We hold 'Meet the Neighbours' events for all new and existing tenants.

### **3. Consultations**

3.1 We commit to consultations and will endeavor to ensure the following policies will always have a full consultation carried out:

- Allocation Policy
- Service Charges
- Maintenance Policy
- Annual rent increase
- The annual report of the Charter to Tenants
- Anti-social behaviour policy
- Communications Policy
- Environmental Plans

3.2 We will commit to promoting national consultations on legislation and regulation including the Scottish Social Housing Charter, and locally, the Govanhill Locality Plan.

3.3 Preparation for the 2024 customer satisfaction survey involved consulting with a small group of tenants and our RTO's to help us ensure the clarity of the survey and that questions were in plain language and easy to understand. Tenants visiting our office over a week helped us establish language or other barriers and this allowed us to fine tune the survey.

3.4 It is important to note that not everyone connected to the Association has a desire, want or need to get involved and we respect that is a valid choice.

#### **4. Registered Tenants Organisations (RTOs)**

4.1 We have supported the development of RTOs at Govanhill and recognize the vital role in engaging with tenants and other residents in the wider community.

- Merrylee RTO engages via Facebook, weekly coffee mornings, environmental activities and an annual Open Day
- Jamieson Court Residents group have disbanded in 2024; however, we still engage with a small group of tenants with social activities and events for older people.
- The MERGE group (Minority Ethnic Residents Group) engages via WhatsApp, and the use of arts and crafts activities
- Govanhill Community Garden Residents & Tenants Association engages through garden related activity, which can include fund-raising, cooking, and events, as well as gardening, and they also encompass the Govanhill Community Remembrance Garden. In 2024, we established a new relationship with the RTO to deliver events for the Association and successfully provided events at Easter, Summer and will deliver a Fall and Christmas event.

4.2 Members also take part in wider training and learning opportunities as they arise, in the past this has included:

- sessions held by the Scottish Housing Regulator
- RTO Network meeting and training on the 2014 Housing Act.
- Internal training / information sessions on tenancy changes; committee skills; team building; community benefit.
- All the RTOs can apply for funding annually from the HA for their engagement work. They produce annual actions plans and report on their activity each year to their members. They have also successfully bid for external funding.
  - Supporting our governance arrangements
  - Our work with the RTOs
  - An examination of our performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter (Annual Return of the Charter)
  - Involving tenants in the self- assessment process
  - Involving tenants in the review of the action plan each year

4.3 We also support groups that do not have RTO status:

- The Coplaw Community residents group
- Govanhill Festival Committee, (which enables us to support many of the

events below)

- The Factored Owners Forum (brings factored owners together every 6 months)
- Community Conversations (more a process than a group, bringing the various communities in Govanhill together) in partnership with GCDT

## **5. Events**

5.1 Through our RTO network and independently we have been involved with:

- Getting To Know You' event (MERGE & ESOL class
- International Women's Day event
- International Men's Day event
- Daffodil Tea (first of 3 events held for older people with Heriot Watt University researching 'Age friendly communities')
- Merrylee Open Day (annually
- 'Meet the Neighbours' brunch (new build)
- Mini-conference / tenants' evening
- Garden and Good Neighbour competitions
- Activities as part of Govanhill International Festival
- Summer day trips
- Festive events
- Community Conversation ceilidhs

The Action Plan for 2024/2025 is attached at Appendix 1 and includes a Calendar of Events January 2024- December 2024.